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Testimony to the Human Services Committee
February 23, 2016

H.B. No. 5249: An Act Establishing The Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board

Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee

My name is Billye Simmers and I want to thank you for raising **House Bill No. 5249: An Act Establishing The Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board**. I am speaking in support of Bill No. 5249.

I am a member of the current Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Advisory Board which has been active in our state since 2004 when the Department of Social Services was awarded a Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) specifically to establish a TBI Advisory Board and a Statewide Action Plan to address the issues facing persons with brain injury. The Statewide Action Plan is posted on the website of the CT Department of Social Services.

The Mission of the current TBI Advisory Board is: To promote the creation, collaboration and coordination of person-driven, accessible, supports, programs, and services for persons with traumatic brain injury, their families and significant others.

When the HRSA Grant came to an end in March 2009, the TBI Advisory Board continued to function under the By-Laws that were established through the HRSA Grant. We have brought together representatives from various State Agencies, private providers, family members and individuals living with the consequences of TBI. This exchange of ideas and concerns has generated a greater awareness of the need for a coordinated system of supports to address the needs of individuals with TBI as well as their families.

TBI is a significant public health issue in Connecticut. The Department of Public Health completed a Prevalence Study covering the years of 1996 – 2000. The report identified 64,000 Connecticut citizens living with TBI. Subsequently DPH completed an incidence study covering 2004 – 2007 that noted an average annual incidence of 2,300 new cases of TBI.

In addition, DPH has published data from hospital ER visits for 2013 that indicate there were 36,660 visits from individuals with a diagnosis of TBI. It must be noted that this does not include those with TBI who went to their primary care physician, a walk-in clinic, were never properly diagnosed, or were mislabeled as mentally ill.

There is a tremendous need for education on the causes and consequences of TBI as well as prevention programs across the communities of Connecticut.

TBI is not like a broken bone that heals after a few weeks. The consequences of TBI last a lifetime.

Approval of House Bill 5249 will ensure that the appropriate stakeholders will continue the conversation.

If I can be of further service, please contact me.

Phone: 203-525-2725

Email: Billye.simmers@gmail.com

Thank you for your time.

**Testimony for HB 5249
An Act Establishing The Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board
Kimberly Molaskey**

Kimberly is a member of the current Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board

Hello and let me start by expressing my sincere gratitude for all the help Connecticut offered and still offers me as I heal from my Traumatic Brain Injury. Receiving my TBI really set me back, as I got it around a week before I was to go start my Master's degree program. Isn't it crazy to go from such a high estate to not even recognizing my own mother at first?

However, the state of CT helped me so much in my journey after the accident and I would feel better knowing other people unfortunately going through the trauma I endured could get the help I luckily received.

In conclusion I again must thank all who have the power to control our well-being for helping me so much! It has been years since my accident now and I love how I was able to rebuild my life to how it should be, and I sincerely appreciate the state's help, so thank you so much! If you are ever interested in a success story of the money and resources going to good use, you can look up Kimberly Molaskey's story!

**With much appreciation,
Kimberly Molaskey**